

Muslims in Public Service

Case Study of AMU Alumni

The success ratio of aspiring candidates to the IAS exams from one of the premier Muslim educational institutions in the country, AMU, remains abysmally low. Amending the reservation quota is widely seen as an exercise in political manipulation; far-reaching results, it is felt, can best be obtained by introducing steps and encouraging NGOs to improve the quality of education at primary levels, and making students equally familiar with English as with Urdu.

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The Muslim community in India has a grouse that the constitutional provision of the right of equality in matters of employment is not being implemented faithfully and, consequently, representation of Muslims in public services is not proportional to their population in the country. The article 'Why Muslims Are Falling Behind in the IAS Race' by Saiyid Hamid, former vice-chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, published in a supplement of *The Times of India*, New Delhi, June 15, 2001, seems to be voice concerns of the Muslim community in India as far as the questions of present state, causes and suggestions are concerned. The issue may be better analysed in the light of all-India trends revealed by the latest published report of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), New Delhi, for the year 1997-98, vis-a-vis the role of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) alumni in securing the coveted administrative positions in the country.

As far as the question of representation of Muslims in administrative services is concerned, the trend is well known and broadly speaking it varies between 2.5 to 3.5 per cent of the total selected candidates in different years. As revealed in the article by Saiyid Hamid, over 17 years, the average representation of Muslims in IAS has been around 2.87 per cent, much lower than the 12 per cent share of Muslims in the total population of the country. To quote Saiyid Hamid,

The poor performance deprives the community of a sense of participation in the governance and management of their country. They are in the process denied

a role in the existing adventure of national reconstruction and development.

Causes of Low Representation

Low representation of Muslims in public services especially administrative services is explained in terms of a number of factors which seem to converge on the demand for reservation quota for Muslims on the basis of religion – a demand which seems to be a wild goose chase in the present circumstances. At present, the total reservation of positions for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes comes to 49 per cent, and according to a verdict of the Supreme Court, for ensuring the fundamental right of equality guaranteed in the Indian Constitution, not more than 50 per cent reservation is allowed for education or employment. Some Muslims enjoy the benefit of reservation under the existing categories and for granting more reservation on the basis of religion, the quota of the existing categories will have to be reduced and it does not seem feasible due to present political compulsions. Some political parties raise the issue of reservation to Muslims on the basis of religion with an eye on the Muslim vote bank, but none of them takes up the issue seriously.

Let us proceed to examine the factors considered responsible for poor representation of Muslims in public services.

Role of a Bias in Selection Procedure

Muslim leadership generally alleges discrimination in the selection procedure in public services. Bias is a part of human psychology but the degree differs from

person to person. The element of bias may be reduced or eliminated totally by inducting objectivity and transparency in the procedure or system. For example, computerised evaluation of OMR sheet used for evaluation in case of IAS or PCS (preliminary) examinations and a system of role numbers and code numbers used in case of IAS or PCS (main) examinations eliminate the probability of a bias, though it may remain in case of personality test where subjectivity plays a more important role. However, the element of bias is reduced by assigning low weightage to interview marks. According to a court verdict, not more than 20 per cent weightage should be assigned to personality test/interview. In the IAS (main) examination followed by a personality test the ratio of marks in the written part and the interview is 9:1. Due to low weightage assigned to personality test, a bias may work in marginal cases, in other cases only the rank may be adversely affected without a chance of total elimination.

A system of moderation of marks, such as currently adopted by the UP Higher Education Commission, Allahabad, for selection of lecturers for government-aided degree colleges of UP, may reduce element of bias in personality test. In this system, where selection is exclusively on the basis of interview, experts in the selection board are told to assign marks to each candidate separately. The chairman of the board asks the individual experts about the marks awarded to each candidate, fixes a range, and experts have to modify the marks to bring them within the determined range, thus reducing the chance of positive or negative bias for or against a candidate.

Thus, bias may play a very marginal role in the selection of higher level public services where objectivity plays a greater role as compared to subjectivity.

Socio-Economic Background of Muslims

While examining the causes of poor representation of Muslims in IAS, the main focus of Saiyid Hamid is on socio-economic, especially educational backwardness of the Muslims in the country. But, the data of the socio-economic family background of 621 successful candidates of IAS 1997 examination released by the UPSC indicates that from the point of view of family background of the selected candidates, Muslims are not in a

disadvantageous position. It was revealed in the report that there has been an increase in the proportion of successful candidates from lower middle class families which have little or no education. Of the 621 successful candidates, 19 said their fathers had no schooling whatsoever, and as many as 114 reported their mothers were illiterate. As far as the economic status of the families of selected candidates is concerned, as high as 72.4 per cent of the successful candidates came from the families having a monthly income below Rs 5,000.

Considering the professional and rural/urban family background of the successful candidates for 1997 IAS examination, it was revealed that 40.7 per cent of the selected candidates came from the families of middle income government or semi-government employees; in case of 14 per cent candidates, farming was the family profession, and heads of the families in case of 13.2 per cent successful candidates were employed in education. The report also pointed towards the changing profile of the civil servants in the following words:

More and more hopefuls with a rural background are making it to the list of successful candidates every year. A third of the successful candidates in 1997, for instance, had their entire schooling in a village or small town, an overwhelming majority of the candidates were first generation entrants to civil services.

From the above data it may be concluded that majority of the successful in the IAS come from less affluent sections of society with limited financial and educational resources and the social elite of the country do not have much incentive or inspiration for these services. Problem of dropout or discontinuation considered to be a natural outcome of economic backwardness of Muslims is generally cited as a probable reason for educational backwardness. But failure in public services reflects the poor quality of education, lack of inspiration and motivation among graduates rather than those who drop out, or discontinue education at some stage.

Lack of Motivation

While Muslim leadership squarely puts the responsibility upon the government for the allegedly biased selection procedure or for educational and economic backwardness of Muslims, the more rational element among the Muslim intellectuals turns the accusing finger towards the shortcomings

of the community too. In this context Saiyid Hamid has pointed out some of the reasons of poor performance of Muslims in IAS as follows: (i) family environment not conducive to awareness, enlightenment and endeavour; (ii) preference of soft options in the choice of subjects; (iii) the vertical split between mainstream schools and madarasas; and (iv) no properly developed middle class.

The points raised by Hamid are very relevant and need further elaborate analyses of the social structure of Muslim families.

A large section of the Muslim population is caught in a vicious circle of lack of excellence in education resulting in poor mobility outside the home town. As the children grow up they are forced to live in a joint family system resulting in the development of a peculiar social culture, not at all conducive to excellence in education. In schools also the children find the same environment where, usually, local teachers and management bear grudges against each other. At a higher level of education, the majority of the Muslim students are denied admission in higher professional courses due to poor schooling, and they are compelled to choose soft options. Coming from this socio-economic background Muslim students at higher level of education lack motivation. The issue may be tested with the help of a case study of AMU.

AMU Alumni in Public Services

The UPSC, New Delhi, publishes information of success ratios in which universitywise and subjectwise break-up of the successful candidates are available. AMU, being the premier institution of higher learning for the Muslims appears to be the most fit case for such a study.

The analysis in the remaining part of this paper is based on the 48th Annual Report of UPSC for the year 1997-98, the latest published report available at present. Appendices VII A and VII B of the Annual Report furnish detailed information about civil services (main) examination 1996 and engineering examination 1996 respectively. Out of 2.293 lakh candidates found eligible for IAS (preliminary) examination, 1.207 lakh actually appeared and out of the successful candidates, 8,098 appeared in IAS (main) examination. Of the successful candidates, 1,516 appeared for the personality test, out of whom 739 candidates were recommended by the commission for the appointment to various services. Thus overall success ratio out

Table 2: Success Ratio in Engineering Service Examination

University/Institution	Number of Candidates		Success Percentage
	Appeared	Qualified	
IITs	254	85	33.5
Roorkee University	258	55	21.3
Allahabad University	264	28	10.6
Banaras Hindu University	97	10	10.3
Lucknow University	146	07	4.8
Aligarh Muslim University	127	05	3.9
All-India	16,034	611	3.81

Source: Same as in Table 1.

Table 3: Educational Background of 739 Selected Candidates in Civil Services Examination 1996

Discipline	Appeared	Selected	Success Ratio (Percentage)
Engineering	658	189	28.7
Medicine	188	37	19.7
Management	67	11	16.4
Others	7185	502	7.0
Total	8098	739	9.125

Source: Same as in Table 1.

Table 1: Success Percentage of Candidates in IAS 1996 Examination

University/Institution	Candidates Appeared	Candidates Qualified	Success Percentages
IITs	475	101	21.26
JNU, New Delhi	224	42	18.75
Punjab University, Chandigarh	150	27	18.00
Delhi University	936	122	13.00
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur	349	38	10.90
Roorkee University	118	12	10.17
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi	21	02	9.50
University of Lucknow	221	16	7.24
Banaras Hindu University	171	10	5.85
Ch Charan Singh, Meerut	98	05	5.10
Aligarh Muslim University	49	02	4.08
University of Allahabad	779	26	3.33
All-India	8098	739	9.125

Source: UPSC, 48th Annual Report 1997-98.

of the candidates who appeared for main examination was 9.126 per cent. IAS (preliminary) examination is considered to be a screening test for determining eligibility to appear in the main examination and success ratio for different educational institutions is taken with respect to the number of candidates who appear in main examination. For the purpose of linking a candidate with a particular university/institution, the highest degree and the university from which these degrees were obtained, is taken into account.

From the information available in the report, the performance of AMU alumni is as given in Table 1.

The performance of AMU standards vis-a-vis other educational institutions or in comparison with the national trend may be summarised in the following paras:

(1) Number of Candidates and Success Percentages: The number of candidates selected from each institution depends to a great extent upon the number who appear in main examination and their performance. A comparative scenario emerges from Table 1.

Though the number of candidates who appear from different universities is not strictly comparable as some universities like Delhi, Allahabad, Lucknow and Chandigarh, etc, have large number of affiliating colleges, yet it may be discerned from the table that the number of candidates who qualify to appear in main examination from AMU as well as from Jamia Millia Islamia – the two premier institutions of Muslims supposed to send a large number of candidates for this examination, is not quite enough to contribute sufficiently to the chunk of selected candidates for civil services. In case of AMU, apart from the number, their success ratio is quite low – lowest in the group with the exception of Allahabad University, which seems to have more than compensated the deficiency by sending a large contingent for the services. The success ratio of BHU is only slightly better than that of AMU, but as a large number of candidates appeared from this university, the number of qualified candidates is five times that of AMU. On negative side, the report listed 56 universities/institutions from where not a single candidate qualified for civil services.

In the engineering service examination 1996, the success ratio of AMU at 3.93 per cent was slightly superior to all-India success ratio of 3.81 per cent and performance of AMU candidates was better as

compared to 79 other institutes/universities which sent candidates for this examination.

But the performance of AMU students was far behind the premier engineering institutes or some universities. The information has been given in Table 2.

The information provided in the above paragraphs proves that it is primarily the quality of the candidates rather than a bias on the ground of religion or region that counts in the ultimate success.

(2) Need for a Proper Strategy: As a career planning move, making civil services an ultimate goal is risky due to very high failure ratio. In the civil services 2000 examination, only 427 candidates were finally selected out of 3.5 lakh candidates who applied for civil services (preliminary) examination with a possibility of success of 1.22 out of 1,000 candidates. Considering this, a judicious policy is “first to secure a professional degree then try for these services”. As the talented students go for professional courses like medicine, engineering and business administration, etc, they, have the capability to go through a tough civil service examination. Table 3 provides information about the educational background of the successful candidates in IAS 1996 examination.

Thus the success ratio of the candidates from engineering, medicine and management background on all-India level was much higher than that of the candidates coming from other streams.

AMU students have not benefited from the collective wisdom of other candidates who aspire for civil services on all-India

level. It appears that after securing a good professional degree they seem to be content with their career and do not try for administrative services. Some information collected from the coaching and guidance centre of AMU revealed that for the civil services 2000 examination not a single candidate from medical background tried for these services, only 11 per cent from management aspired for these services, and the rest, i.e., 80.5 per cent came from other streams in which success ratio at all-India level was lower than the overall success ratio. This, apart from other factors, is an important cause of the poor success ratio at AMU.

(3) Education Policy Adopted by Muslims: It is the quality rather than quantity, which counts for success in public services. The main thrust of education policy adopted by almost all Muslim NGOs in the country is on quantity – how to increase literacy percentage among males and females, how to check dropout ratio and how to produce graduates or postgraduate degree holders in arts, science or commerce streams without due consideration for job market requirements. Excellence in education has never been on the agenda of the Muslim NGOs while their Christian counterparts emphasise, in theory and practice, the quantitative as well as qualitative aspects of education.

Madarsa education is essential for promoting the cause of religion, but considering the structure of curricula of these institutions it is evident that the alumni, in general, are not capable to compete for these services. No data about the

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percentage of Muslim population in the relevant age group attending madaras is available, yet it may be estimated between 5 to 10 per cent of the total population of Muslim students in the country.

A large section of the Muslim intelligentsia advocates Urdu as medium of instruction for Muslim students in the country without having a long-term vision of Muslims going on higher or professional education and ultimately securing a good position in the job market. As higher or professional education is not available through Urdu medium, the students have to switch over from one medium to another and in majority of cases they fail to achieve a command over the new medium. English is recognised as the main international language and the English press, in India as well as on global level, provides standard information literature through books, periodicals, newspapers, etc. Other forms of media like internet or television also provide standard information through English language. Urdu as medium of instruction may help in increasing literacy percentages among socially and economically backward classes of Muslims, yet it fails to bring excellence as well as in grooming young generation for the job market.

Ineffectiveness of Urdu medium as a success factor in the civil services examination may be gauged from the fact that out of 8,098 candidates who qualified for IAS (main) examination 1996, 5,000 (61.74 per cent) took English as medium of examination, 2,824 (34.87 per cent) adopted Hindi medium, 271 (3.35 per cent) did it through regional languages and only four candidates offered Urdu as medium. The data relate to the number of candidates who appeared in the examination, while mediumwise break-up of the candidates who qualified and were finally selected after personality test was not available in the report.

Conclusion

Mere repetition of fact/data about under-representation of Muslims in public services, or making it a ground for demand of reservation quota for Muslims as a community, appears to be a futile exercise and may not solve the problem as has been the case since independence. For correcting the malady, Muslims need a mass movement in which basic thrust should be on qualitative aspect of education. The movement is to be started from grass roots

level of education. As schools, run or aided by the government have utterly failed to provide quality education, Muslim NGOs should come forward to take up the task. A responsible behaviour of school management should be the starting point of the movement and the appointment of principal/teachers should be strictly on the basis of merit rather than on extraneous considerations. Principals should maintain strict discipline for which some missionary schools are known. Teachers should take their job as a challenge, as a part of

a larger movement rather than as merely a service to school. An environment conducive to good education is to be maintained at family level and here the role of parents becomes important. The basic responsibility of schools as well as of families is to groom students to make them capable to enter higher education, especially in professional courses. The right approach will be to secure a professional degree followed by rigorous efforts to enter the civil services or other public service examinations. **EPW**